

FEBRUARY 1989.

# *Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat* *Incorporated.*

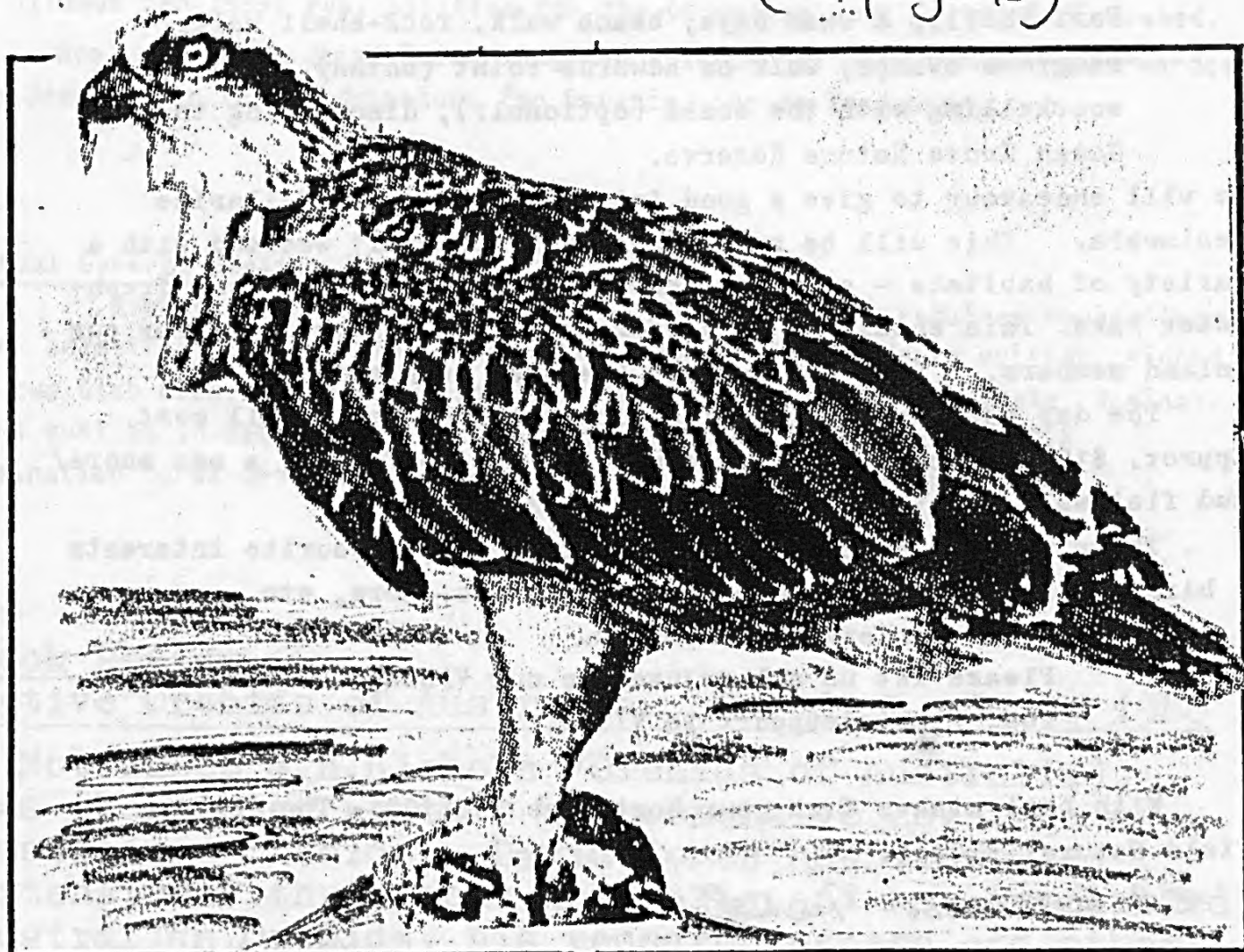
## EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting : Feb. 3rd. Dr. D. Baker-Gabb - 'Raptors'

Meeting : March 3rd. Annual General Meeting

Excursion : Feb. 5th. Bostock Reservoir Area - Mr. L. Fink.

Excursion : March 5th. - To be announced. - *Point Cook*  
*(See page 6)*



President;	Dr. F. Harrap	Ph. 053 301651
Vice Pres.	Miss H. Burgess	312210
Secretary:	Mr. G. Binns	332282
Treasurer:	Mrs. F. Williamson	327631
Editor:	Mr. A. Barlow	413378

Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydlard Street 5th. Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m.  
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, cnr. STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS., BALLARAT, at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR AT 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY\*

LABOUR DAY WEEKEND V.F.N.C.A./W.V.F.N.C.A. AGM & CAMPOUT 1989.

It was agreed at the WVFNCA AGM/Campout at Warrnambool this year to join the VFNCA in a combined weekend next year. We feel this should prove most successful and provide better representation of Clubs at the one venue.

An outline of the proposed weekend is as follows. (A final programme will be circulated in early February next year). Please inform your members so they may reserve this weekend in their diaries.

LOCALITY: Bellarine Peninsula.

ACCOMMODATION: Bunk-style, Ocean Grove Uniting Church Camp, \$16.00/day including 3 meals. Caravan Parks and Motels in Ocean Grove & surrounding area (please book your own).

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: Marine Biology cruise in conjunction with Marine Studies Centre personnel, approx. 5 hours on Port Phillip & Swan Bays; beach walk, rock-shelf walk, mangrove swamps, walk on Edwards Point (botany, birds), snorkelling with the seals (optional!), discovering the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.

We will endeavour to give a good introduction to the Bellarine Peninsula. This will be predominantly a "Coastal" weekend with a variety of habitats - sea, sea-shore, rock shelf, mangroves, fresh-water lake. This should be a "different" weekend especially for our inland members. Barbeque lunches (weather permitting).

The day boat-trip and snorkelling with the seals will cost approx. \$15.00 each. For those who are not seafarers, a sea shore/mud flat walk or other activity will be arranged.

There will be opportunities to pursue many favourite interests - birds, plants, marine biology, geology, sea-shore, etc.

Please inform your members.

Please let us all rejuvenate our VFNCA!

Your club's support is VITAL!!

With best wishes from your Host Club 1988/89 - The Geelong Field Naturalists Club.

*E.R. Southcombe* *Re Dal*

President.

*Diana Pennino*

Secretary/Treasurer (*D. Pennino*)

*VFNCA*

*9/0* G.F.N.C. Inc.;  
P.O. Box 1047,  
GEELONG 3220.

## Committee Report - Nov.22nd '88

Items treated were:-

- 1 Correspondence.
- 2 Mallee Review Submission was approved.
- 3 Wetlands Conserveation Programme. Agreed that Pres. & Sec. would meet with B.O.C. representatives to prepare a joint submission, due Dec.31st.
- 4 Newsletter distribution; It was agreed all financial members should receive a copy of the Newsletter. Most appropriate method to be discussed with members.
- 5 Outstanding membership subscriptions. The Treasurer suggested a system be found to expedite membership renewal. Agreed a membership renewal form be prepared for use in 1989.
- 6 Re. disabled persons; H.Burgess reported a request from an organisation for Club policy on membership of disabled persons. It was noted the Club is sympathetic to attendance of any interested person at meetings and excursions but it was agreed all excursions could not be designed to ensure access for all disabled persons.
- 7 Sllabus for 1989; Possibilities for the programme were listed & discussed.
- 8 Bon voyage to Jenny Dalman. Agreed a letter of good wishes be forwarded to Jenny prior to her departure for Ontario, Canada in January.

## Annual General Meeting, March 3rd.

Members are reminded that the Constitution requires nominations for Committee members for the coming year must be made in writing, signed by two Club members and accompanied by written consent of candidate. Nominations must be in Secretary's hands before the time fixed for the A.G.M. Nomination forms available at Feb. meeting or from the Secretary.

## Book Review.

### Native Orchids of Australia. David. L. Jones 1988

Not since W.H.Nichols "Orchids of Australia), has there been another comprehensive coverage of Australian Orchids. David Jones has travelled extensively throughout Australia and has researched Australian Orchids, his research papers and other publications are well known. He is a professional horticulturist and botanist, his studies cover more than 25 years research on Aust. Orchids.

This book also covers the propagation cultivation housing and pests of Orchids. L.F.



John McLaughlin. "Barn Owls" and Owls in General.

John is doing a post graduate degree, his studies is owls and Barn Owls in particular.

Of the 130 species of owls in the World, about 2/3 are active during the night.

There are two orders of Australian Nocturnal Birds, they the CAPRIMULGIFORMES containing the Frogmouths (Podargidae) and the Nightjars (Caprimulgidae) and the Owlet Nightjar (Aegothelidae)

The other is the STRIGIFORMES which contains the Owls (Strigidae) and the Barb Owls (Tytonidae).

We saw some slides of Nightjars, however, the Owls were the topic of the night.

Owls have a number of features in common with Diurnal birds of prey, heavy powerful talons and a strong hooked beak. Owls are closely related to Nightjars.

These birds have other adaptions, they see better in low light and they have a very keen sense of hearing, this coupled with a reduction in flight noise makes them very efficient predators.

Owls have world wide distribution and range from the snow to the Elf Owl nesting in cactus in the deserts of South America, there are some that catch fish.

Of the Australian Owls the most common is the Boobook it is found all over Australia and in most of the Islands, it is the smallest and usually rest in dense foliage trees. They breed from Sep-Nov. in hollow limbs or trunks of trees and lay 2 to 4 eggs, they prey on small mammals.(mice) and small birds and insects.

The Barking Owl is one of our pleasant night time noises, they are noisy birds and their barking call is heard all the year around, sometimes in Autumn they produce a rather terrifying high pitched tremulous scream. It is found around the coast mainly the east coast and inland from about Carnarvon W.A. to Port Augusta S.A. and around the south west corner of W.A.. Their prey is small mammals and birds in S.A. they feed particularly on rabbits also small hares and possums and birds up to the size of a tawney frogmouth.

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They breed from July to Oct. nesting in hollow trees where 2to3 dull white eggs are laid

They favour heavily wooded country, savanna woodland (most common) and riverine woodland, they usually roost in a leafy tree in several sights, they have round heads and very bright eyes.

Powerful Owls are the largest of our Owls being up to 650mm long usually it is found in a tall well leafed forest tree by day, they are shy birds and will sometimes fly away if disturbed before you see them. They prey on mammals and birds up to kookaburra size, possumn, gliders and rabbits make up their usual diet. Powerful Owls nest in hollow trees at least 15 metres above the ground.

The female lays 2 dull white eggs and sits for about 38 days, she alone incubates them, they start nesting in May.

The rufous Owl lives in the northern parts of Australia and in the rain forests of Queensland, little is known of this large bird, it is similar in many ways to the Powerful Owl, in its call and many other ways.

The rarely seen Sooty Owl lives in dimly lit forests and has the largest eyes of all the Barn Owls, there is a Southern Sooty Owl larger than its Northern Brother. They live on arboreal mammals as well as ground living mammals, birds and insects, it has the shortest tail of any of the Barn Owls. It breeds in June-July in tree hollows lined with rotting wood. 1or2 white eggs are normally laid.

The Masked Owl is the largest of the Barn Owls found in the southern eastern and northern parts of Australia, except in the dry inland, and Tas, it feeds mainly on small mammal and at night can be seen standing on the ground. It nests in caves or tree hollows from June to Oct, and lays 2-3 dull white eggs. The Tasmanian race is larger, it has a dark and light phase.

The Eastern Grass Owl has long leggs and lives in tussocky grass areas, it is the only owl that doesn't nest in a hollow tree. It preys on small



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mammals and insects.. It is a northern bird found mainly on the coast, although a small area around Lake Frome is well inland, it moves around a lot.

The Barn Owl *Tito alba* is a bird that is not often seen but it has a wide range being found in all states and Tas. however it is common in many places, in cities and even Bass St. oil rigs, a banded one was found to travel 1700 km.

The Barn Owl breeds mainly in Autumn, nesting deep in a hollow log where up to 11 eggs have found, but usually 4 to 6 white eggs are laid.

Apart from the Australia, Barn Owls are found in Europe, Africa, India and America. There are over 30 sub species, they roost by day in tree hollows, barns, roofs and caves and even in old mine shafts.

In Southern Aust. the mouse is its most frequent prey although small marsupials, birds, lizards and most night flying insects. It is a beautifully marked bird. They tend to build up numbers during mouse plagues, this accounts for the number of emaciated found both dead and dying. The Aust. Barn Owl belongs to the subspecies *TITO alba delicatula*

John was thanked for his talk in the usual manner after a lengthy discussion

L.F.

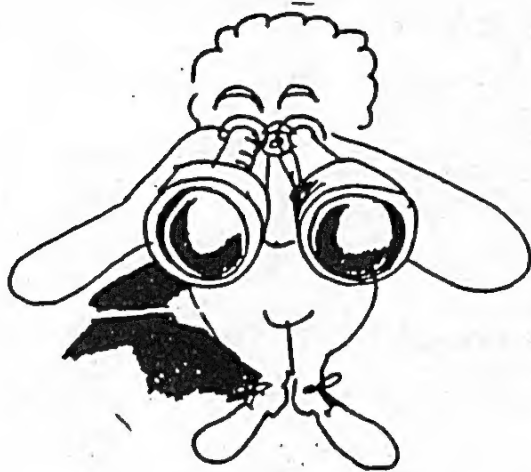
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#### February Speaker Dr. David Baker-Gabb

Dr. Baker-Gabb has carried out extensive field survey work for the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union in the study of the Plains Wanderer and the Red Goshawk, two of our rare and endangered bird species. We are very fortunate to have him speak on Field Identification of Raptors, The Red Goshawk Study, and the Bird Of Prey (B.O.P.) watch programme, and are grateful for his attendance at our monthly meeting.

#### March Outing.

Point Cook Homestead, all day excursion, waders and seabirds, picnic area, bathers for swimming and fossicking,



### Field Reports - December Meeting.

H.Burgess      Frightened starling laid an egg in full view of audience in a local hall. Koala seen again in Moola St.

M.Rotheram      Nesting continuing at Mt.Beckwith; Grey Fantail; Dusky Woodswallow; Wagtail; Red-browed Finch; Yellow-faced H' eater; Superb Blue Wren.

F.Harrap      At Blackwood; Rufous & Grey Fantails building; Satin Flycatcher, Crescent H' eater, Blue-winged Parrots. At Clunes; Painted H' eater, Budgerigars, Rainbow Lorikeets; a Mistletoe Bird nesting.

K.McDonnell      8-10 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at Invermay, the first for some time.

G.Binns      Peregrine Falcon nest under surveillance at Devel following report by Bill Whiteside. Two chicks in old Eagles nest. Koala in house gardens in Pleasant St. Sth. Ballarat, Nov. 17th.

### Recent and Current Projects.

Through the committee, the club has been/is involved in the following initiatives, submitting comments for consideration by the respective originating bodies.

1. Mallee review      -L.C.C. of Victoria.
2. Wetlands conservation programme for Victoria  
D/G, F. and L
3. Ballarat region Strategy Plan - B.R.B.A.P.S.C.
4. State Plantations Impact Study - D/C.F and L.  
Due February 24.

Members who are interested in these programmes should check the study documents and would be welcomed by the subcommittees working on: responses.

At present ( Jan. 1989 ) there are many plantains growing and flowering, probably because the spring was very wet. Many of them are regarded as weeds.

Most of the plantains are introduced and four species are recorded for the Ballarat area ( Beauglehole )

The plantains belong to the genus *Plantago* which is the only genus found in south-east Australia. ( *Plantago* is the Latin name for several European species of this genus.)

Plantains are easily recognized. The long leaves, often with distinct ribs, usually form a rosette close to the ground and the small flowers are found at the summit (top) of scapes ( flower stalk ) arising from ground level.

One of the plantains ( *Plantago lanceolata* ) is sometimes called " Ribgrass ", but it is not a grass !

The individual flowers are small. There are 4 sepals 4 lobes to the corolla; 4 stamens inserted in the corolla tube. The anthers are often borne on a thread-like filament and are readily seen at flowering time.

H.H.

### Bush Plants and the By-Pass Route.

Mr Greg. Wallace of the Dep of C.F.andL. has observed that among the stands of native plants that will be bulldozed when the new by-pass route is constructed in the Nerrina area there are some worthy of preservation for replanting on the eventual roadside reserves, by the Freeway.

Greg has suggested that the Club may be interested in being involved in moving plants to a holding locality at the time of removal, and in returning them on completion of the roadworks.

Some action may occur in March, so this is a project we will need to consider immediately.

Members are asked to give it some thought, and advise the committee on interest.

G.B.